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# FARM LABOR

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## FLORIDA

The number of workers paid by farmers and agricultural services totaled 75,000 for the week of January 11 through 17. Farmers hired 61,000 workers compared with 49,000 in October 2003 and 70,000 in January 2003. Agricultural services provided 14,000 paid workers, up 10,000 from last quarter, but 3,000 less than those supplies a year ago.

Cool, dry conditions allowed field work to progress normally during the survey week. Sugarcane harvesting was active in the Everglades region, while potato planting progressed in the Hastings area. Livestock producers fed supplemental feeds as needed. Spring crop vegetable planting was

active over the southern Peninsula. Grove caretakers started fertilizing trees in anticipation of new growth. Citrus and vegetable harvesting was very active.

The January all hired worker wage rate averaged \$8.92 per hour, 62 cents or six percent lower than the October 2003 wage of \$9.54, but two cents higher than the \$8.90 paid last year. Farmers paid an average of \$8.85 per hour, 68 cents lower than the \$9.53 paid in October, but four cents above the \$8.81 paid last year. Agricultural services paid workers an average of \$9.25 per hour, forty cents lower than the \$9.65 paid last quarter and ten cents below the \$9.35 paid last year.

## UNITED STATES

There were 847,000 hired workers on the Nation's farms and ranches during the week of January 11-17, 2004, down 5 percent from a year ago. Of these hired workers, 667,000 workers were hired directly by farm operators. Agricultural service employees on farms and ranches made up the remaining 180,000 workers.

Farm operators paid their hired workers an average wage of \$9.41 per hour during the January 2004 reference week, up 7 cents from a year earlier. Field workers received an average of \$8.39 per hour, up 9 cents from last January, while livestock workers earned \$8.84 per hour compared with \$8.90 a year earlier. The field and livestock worker combined wage rate, at \$8.55 per hour, was up 5 cents from last year. The number of hours worked averaged 38.1 hours for hired workers during the survey week, up 1 percent from a year ago.

The largest decreases in number of hired farm workers from last year occurred in the Northeast I (New England and New York), Pacific (Oregon and Washington) and Mountain III (Arizona and New Mexico) regions and in California and Florida. In the Northeast I region, an Arctic cold snap prevailed across the area, severely limiting outdoor activity and reducing the demand for hired workers. Cold, snowy weather in much of the Pacific region brought most farm and orchard work to a standstill. Therefore, fewer hired workers were needed. In the Mountain III region, Arizona's hay harvest was behind normal, which lessened the need for field workers. Also, the ongoing drought in New Mexico forced sheep and cattle operations to cull their herds, which lowered the demand for livestock workers. Cold, damp and foggy conditions in California's Central Valley severely curtailed many field activities. Therefore, fewer workers were needed in comparison to the January 2003 reference week when dry conditions and above normal temperatures prevailed the entire week. In

Florida, a return to more normal weather patterns compared to the hard freeze during last January's reference week brought the demand for hired workers down. Many citrus and strawberry growers had hired extra workers to help minimize freeze damage last year.

The largest increases in number of hired farm workers from a year ago were in the Southern Plains (Oklahoma and Texas), Lake (Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin), Southeast (Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina) and Delta (Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi) regions. In the Southern Plains region, supplemental feeding was increasing as pastures and ranges became depleted from winter grazing. This led to a greater demand for livestock workers. Continued expansion in the nursery and greenhouse industry and larger livestock inventories in the Lake region necessitated more hired workers. In the Southeast and Delta regions, activity in nurseries and greenhouses was accelerating, and some field crop and vegetable growers got an early start on field preparations for spring plantings. Therefore, more hired workers were needed.

Hired farm worker wage rates were generally above a year ago in most regions. The largest increases occurred in the Appalachian II (Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia), Corn Belt I (Illinois, Indiana and Ohio), Corn Belt II (Iowa and Missouri) and Delta regions. The higher wages in the Appalachian II region were mainly due to a higher percentage of equine workers and nursery and greenhouse workers in the work force. In the Corn Belt, wages were up due to a greater demand for skilled workers. Higher grain prices led to considerable movement of crop to market. This caused more truck drivers and machine operators to be needed for hauling. Wages in the Delta region were up because of a larger concentration of salaried workers putting in fewer hours.

**Table 1 -- Florida agricultural workers, number of workers, wage rates, and hours worked, January 11 - 17, 2004, with comparisons**

Employer, Year, and survey week	Hired Workers							
	Number of workers			Hours Worked Per Week	Wages Paid by Type of Work			
	All	Expected to work			All	Field	Livestock	
		150 days or more	149 days or less					
HIRED BY FARMERS								
		Thousands		Hours	Dollars Per Hour <sup>1/</sup>			
2004	January 11-17	61.0	54.0	7.0	41.7	8.85	7.70	8.60
2003	October 12 -18	49.0	43.0	6.0	39.1	9.53	8.55	7.95
	July 6 - 12	45.0	39.0	6.0	39.0	9.55	8.55	8.30
	April 6 - 12	53.0	42.0	11.0	38.3	8.86	8.05	8.10
	January 12 - 18	70.0	56.0	14.0	37.2	8.81	7.80	8.30
2002	October 6 - 12	57.0	51.0	6.0	38.9	8.67	7.50	8.60
	July 7 - 13	43.0	38.0	5.0	37.5	8.48	7.25	7.80
	April 7 - 13	52.0	46.0	6.0	40.6	8.57	7.75	7.50
	January 6 - 12	62.0	50.0	12.0	37.2	8.97	8.15	8.55
HIRED BY AGRICULTURAL SERVICES								
2004	January 11 - 17	14.0			38.5	9.25		
2003	October 12 -18	4.0			38.0	9.65		
	July 6 - 12	3.0			41.0	9.25		
	April 6 - 12	17.0			33.0	9.40		
	January 12 - 18	17.0			32.0	9.35		
2002	October 6 - 12	5.0			31.5	9.00		
	July 7 - 13	4.0			42.5	9.25		
	April 7 - 13	11.0			34.0	9.00		
	January 6 - 12	19.0			38.5	8.25		
HIRED BY BOTH FARMERS & AGRICULTURAL SERVICES								
2004	January 11 - 17	75.0				8.92		
2003	October 12 -18	53.0				9.54		
	July 6 - 12	48.0				9.53		
	April 6 - 12	70.0				8.98		
	January 12 - 18	87.0				8.90		
2002	October 6 - 12	62.0				8.69		
	July 7 - 13	47.0				8.55		
	April 7 - 13	63.0				8.63		
	January 6 - 12	81.0				8.80		

<sup>1/</sup> Benefits, such as housing and meals, are provided some workers but the values are not included in the wage rates.

**Table 2 -- Number of workers hired by farmers, wage rates, and hours worked,  
selected States, January 11 - 17, 2004, with comparisons <sup>1/</sup>**

Item	Florida	California	Texas & Oklahoma	Arizona & New Mexico	Hawaii	United States <sup>2/</sup>
<i>Thousands</i>						
<b>ALL HIRED WORKERS</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	61	195	60	16	7	667
October 12 - 18, 2003	49	230	54	18	7	891
January 12 - 18, 2003	70	235	50	22	7	729
<b>EXPECTED TO WORK</b>						
<b>150 days or more</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	54	160	45	15	6	554
October 12 - 18, 2003	43	179	43	15	6	626
January 12 - 18, 2003	56	195	40	20	6	614
<b>149 days or less</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	7	35	15	1	1	113
October 12 - 18, 2003	6	51	11	3	1	265
January 12 - 18, 2003	14	40	10	2	1	115
<i>Dollars per hour <sup>3/</sup></i>						
<b>ALL HIRED WORKER WAGE RATE</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	8.85	9.46	8.43	8.37	11.11	9.41
October 12 - 18, 2003	9.53	9.13	8.01	8.18	11.56	9.05
January 12 - 18, 2003	8.81	9.44	8.85	8.12	11.04	9.34
<b>WAGES BY TYPE OF WORKER</b>						
<b>Field &amp; Livestock</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	7.77	8.54	7.73	7.69	9.39	8.55
October 12 - 18, 2003	8.48	8.54	7.39	7.63	9.88	8.47
January 12 - 18, 2003	7.87	8.46	8.29	7.48	9.36	8.50
<b>Field</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	7.70	8.40	7.46	7.44	9.26	8.39
October 12 - 18, 2003	8.55	8.37	7.12	7.16	9.82	8.42
January 12 - 18, 2003	7.80	8.22	8.13	6.92	9.31	8.30
<b>Livestock</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	8.60	9.30	7.97	7.98	<sup>4/</sup>	8.84
October 12 - 18, 2003	7.95	9.80	7.70	8.73	<sup>4/</sup>	8.64
January 12 - 18, 2003	8.30	10.10	8.51	8.22	<sup>4/</sup>	8.90
<i>Average hours per week</i>						
<b>HOURS WORKED BY ALL HIRED WORKERS</b>						
<b>January 11 - 17, 2004</b>	41.7	41.6	34.0	44.9	39.4	38.1
October 12 - 18, 2003	39.1	42.7	41.7	47.9	38.9	40.2
January 12 - 18, 2003	37.2	40.8	37.9	47.2	37.9	37.7

<sup>1/</sup> Excludes Agricultural Service workers.

<sup>2/</sup> United States excludes Alaska.

<sup>3/</sup> Value of any perquisites provided are not included in wage rates.

<sup>4/</sup> Insufficient data for this category; included in all hired wages.

## Reliability of Farm Labor Estimates

**SURVEY PROCEDURES:** These data were collected by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) during the last two weeks of January using sampling procedures to ensure every employer of agricultural workers had a chance of being selected.

Two samples of farm operators are selected. First, NASS maintains a list of farms that hire farm workers. Farms on this list are classified by size and type. Those expected to employ large numbers of workers are selected with greater frequency than those hiring few or no workers. A second sample consists of segments of land scientifically selected from an area sampling frame. Each June, highly trained interviewers locate each selected land segment and identify every farm operating land within the sample segment's boundaries. The names of farms found in these area segments are matched against the NASS list of farms; those not found on the list are included in the labor survey sample to represent all farms. This methodology is known as multiple frame sampling with an area sample used to measure the incompleteness of the list. Additionally, a list of agricultural service firms was sampled in California and Florida. The survey reference week was January 11-17, 2004.

**RELIABILITY:** Two types of errors, sampling and non-sampling, are always present in an estimate based on a sample survey. Both types affect the "accuracy" of the estimates.

Sampling error occurs because a complete census is not taken. The sampling error measures the variation in estimates from the average of all possible samples. An estimate of 100 with a sampling error of 1 would mean that chances are 19 out of 20 that the estimates from all possible samples averaged together would be between 98 and 102; which is the survey estimate, plus or minus two times the sampling error. The sampling error expressed as a percent of the estimate is called the relative sampling error. The relative sampling error for number of hired workers at the U.S. level is normally less than 5 percent. The relative sampling error

for the number of hired workers generally ranged between 10 and 23 percent at the regional level. The U.S. all hired farm worker wage rate had a relative sampling error of 4.7 percent. The relative sampling error was 1.2 percent for the combined field and livestock worker wage rate. Relative sampling errors for the all hired farm worker wage rate generally ranged between 3 and 18 percent at the regional levels. Relative sampling errors for wage rates published by type of farm and economic class of farm ranged between 1 and 55 percent at the regional level.

Non-sampling errors can occur in a complete census as well as in sample surveys. They are caused by the inability to obtain correct information from each operation sampled, differences in interpreting questions or definitions, and mistakes in editing, coding or processing the data. Special efforts are taken at each step of the survey to minimize non-sampling errors.

**Revision Policy:** Farm labor information is subject to revision the next time the information is published or the year after the original publication date. The basis for revision must be supported by additional data that directly affect the level of the estimate. Worker numbers and wage rates for January 2003 and October 2003 were subject to revision with this report. If any revisions were made to previous data, they are reprinted in this report for your information, and they are identified as such.

**Next Farm Labor Publication Date:** The May 21st report will have information for the survey week of April 11-17, 2004. The report will include the number of All Hired Workers, Average Hours Worked by Hired Workers and the All Hired Worker Wage Rates at the Regional and U.S. levels. The wage rates for field, livestock, and combined field and livestock workers will also be available at the Regional and U.S. level. The number of Agricultural Service Workers and the corresponding wage rates will be published for California and Florida.